

Message Text

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53

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-11 ACDA-05 NEAE-00

SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04

H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 /085 W

----- 122552

O 091800Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY RABAT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7647

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMCONSUL TANGIER

USMISSION USUN

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 0715

USCINCEUR AND CINCUSNAVEUR ALSO FOR POLADS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PBOR MO SP SS AG MR

SUBJECT: GOM FORCES REPORTEDLY OCCUPY ANOTHER POLISARIO CENTER

1. CONTINUING THEIR ADVANCE EASTWARD, GOM FORCES HAVE REPORTEDLY
OCCUPIED BIR LAHLOU, ACCORDING TO SEMI-OFFICIAL MAROC SOIR FEB. 9.

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CITING REUTERS DISPATCH FROM EL AYOUN, LEAD STORY SAID "ALGERIAN

FORCES HAD PREVIOUSLY WITHDRAWN" AND THAT THERE WAS NO FIGHTING. STORY NOTED THAT BIR LAHLOU LOCATED ABOUT 150 KMS SOUTH OF MAHBES, AN "IMPORTANT ALGERIAN GARRISON." TANTALIZING COMMENT AT END OF ITEM SAID THERE INDICATIONS THAT ALGERIAN "MAY HAVE UNDERTAKEN TO EVACUATE MAHBES."

2. COMMENT: OCCUPATION OF BIR LAHLOU, LAST POPULATION CENTER IN NEASTERN SAHARA EXCEPT MAHBES WHICH NOT IN GOM HANDS, WOULD COMPLETE WHAT WE UNDERSTAND TO HAVE BEEN THIS PHASE OF OPERATION. MAHBES IS NOW PRESUMABLY FLANKED ON THREE SIDES AND WE WILL AWAIT TO SEE HOW CONTENDING PARTIES DEAL WITH THIS POTENTIAL CONFRONTATION. KNOWLEDGEABLE SOURCES IN RABAT TELL US ALGERIAN WITHDRAWAL FROM BOTH TIFARITI AND BIR LAHLOU WAS BY PREARRANGEMENT (SEPTEL). ON OTHER HAND, GOM FIRST COULD TURN SOUTH FOR MOPPING UP OF AIN BEN TILI AND OTHER AREAS IN MAURITANIA, AS STORY HINTS.
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